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Letter From the Executive Director,HITM

Dear Reader,

This issue of our journal marks the second year of publication a significant milestone for many organisations. It also corresponds to the start of a period when healthcare IT moves up Europe's policy agenda. The EU's new Seventh Framework Programme on research highlights healthcare as one of seven key Challenges for the future. Explicit healthcare IT elements are also found in several other Challenges.

The EU move endorses the fact that healthcare IT straddles four revolutions. Their cumulative impact ranges from technology and economics, to ethics, demography and politics.

The first revolution entails a shift in IT design – towards lighter, Web-enabled systems, alongside other developments- wireless transmission, RFID and portable input/access devices. These impact on the modernisation of the wider hospital environment, from the operating room to the hospital lab. Our cover story takes a look at how such forces are shaping new generation laboratory systems.

The second revolution in healthcare IT concerns the dual thrust of biotechnology and nanotechnology. Discoveries in areas like biomarkers will impact on the entire healthcare sector, from pharmaceuticals research through hospital labs to the delivery of personalised healthcare.

The third is about medico-cultural issues, driven by economics and the growing pressure of cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Key themes here include the management of chronic diseases in an aging population, encouraging out-patient healthcare and empowering patients.

The fourth revolution is globalisation. As boundaries between traditionally IT 'silos' erode, so do those between nations. The emergence of India and China as global growth engines and high-technology centres will impact on Europe across the board; healthcare IT is no exception.

These disruptive trends are driving healthcare IT to the frontiers of high-value knowledge work. As new standards, methodologies and operating procedures emerge, and do so in the face of new global paradigms, it is crucial that healthcare IT managers in Europe not only stay abreast of trends, but also influence the shape of their own futures.

Such issues are discussed in considerable depth by experts in this issue of Healthcare IT Management. So too are solutions, such as implementation of an electronic laboratory notebook project and a sweeping IT systems modernisation at France's Arras Hospital. Arras is now primed for the upcoming e-Health wave - one of the clearest success stories of the EU Lisbon Agenda.

Our Country Focus section takes a look at the Netherlands – where 15-month old health insurance reforms are bound to produce new pressures on hospitals in general, and healthcare IT managers in particular.

As part of our resolve to both drill down to details on issues of concern to our readers, and maintain a bird's eye view on the Big Picture, we are pleased to announce the appointment of a new Managing Editor. Ashutosh (Tosh) Sheshabalaya has a decade of experience in the European healthcare industry, with Frost & Sullivan, PriceWaterhouse and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries. More recently, he has earned considerable recognition in Europe, the US and Asia as a writer and speaker on business, technology and globalisation.

Yours faithfully,

Christian Marolt

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